

Village Wastewater Project

Answers to your Questions about Highgate's Wastewater Project

1) Who is proposing this Project?

The Village Core Master Plan Committee was formed shortly after the Former Machia Property was purchased by the Town in 2017. This group of volunteers was then tasked to determine the best path forward for the redevelopment of our Village Center. Since that time, the Committee has completed the following tasks:

- Highgate Library & Community Center Feasibility Study (2017)
- Community Survey (2018)
- Implementation Plan for Highgate Town Center (2019)
- Brownsfields Assessment (2017)
- Cleanup/Demo of Old Café (2018)
- Historic Assessment of Stinehour Hotel (2020)
- Wastewater Feasibility/Preliminary Engineering Investigation (2021)
- Wastewater Property Option Exploration (2022)
- Public Vote to purchase Wright Property (2023)

2) How is this Project being funded?

- Wright Property was funded by \$200,000 (CWSRF Grant) & \$100,000 (ARPA)
- All completed Tasks so far – Funded by Grants & \$42,000 for VCMP Budget
- Wastewater Final Design -Planning, CWSRF & State ARPA Grants
- Wastewater Construction - \$1,457,000 State ARPA Grant
- \$2,550,000 CWSRF Grant
- Applying for additional grants

3) Why do we need Village Wastewater?

In order to properly develop the Village Core Property, the Town must have a Community wastewater system. This proposed system protects the Village residents drinking water, ground water and septic systems. It allows for failed and aging systems to join the new wastewater system when their

Options may be limited due to property size, neighboring properties, or costs. It also allows for Highgate to comply with current State and Federal laws. And it isn't a new idea, East Highgate had a Community Water System 100 years ago.

4) How does this benefit me?

If I live in the Village? This project protects your family and your property. You will have the opportunity to hook up to the new system in advance or if you have an aging system, a failed system or could not afford a newly designed system.

If I do not live in the Village? The Village Wastewater System benefits all of us. It protects the Town's ground water supply and the wildlife and plant life of our Town. But, it also allows the redevelopment of the Village Center which leads to a larger Grand List - meaning your portion of the tax bill for the Town goes down. So as the Town gets more businesses, the residents can share more of the tax burden with them.

5) How many Village residents need or want this wastewater system?

The Town is currently surveying the Village residents to find out the state of their systems and what their needs may be. Some may or may not know their status, but

the Town will work with residents to educate them about their septic systems.

6) What is the environmental impact of this project? The environmental impact of this project is purely positive. Properly designed wastewater system like ours are made to benefit the soils, wildlife, water safety, and plant life.

7) Has this area been surveyed for sensitive environmental and archaeological areas? Yes, there is additional archaeological study planned that has been paid for with a state planning grant.

8) Has the Town explored other options for this Community Wastewater Project? Yes, we have. We have explored other sewer system types, local wells and septic systems, other land options and various soil and groundwater testing.

9) How long will this project take? If a construction vote passes in 2024, the Community Wastewater project should be finished by the Fall of 2025.

10) What will the Village look like after the Wastewater Project? The majority of the system is underground, people will never even know it's there.

11) When will the Public participate? The Public is invited to participate at every step of this project. All VCMP Meetings are public, all studies and designs are public information. There was a Public Vote on July 20, 2023 to purchase 18 +/- acres from WRB LLC off Lamkin Street. There will be another Public Vote to proceed with Construction of this Wastewater Project in the future. Please look for information on the website, Facebook, local store posters, post office posters and in the newspaper for the date of that vote.

12) If Construction is approved, will it occur all at once or in stages? It will depend upon the funding available at the time of construction.

13) Who will maintain the Wastewater System once it is operational? Maintenance for this system should be minimal; but the Current Public Works crew should be capable of regular maintenance and additional expertise may be needed by an engineer on rare occasions.

14) How will the Town pay for any maintenance? Hook-up and flow fees should more than cover the standard costs of maintenance for a system such as ours; and allow us to save for future expenses.

15) When will final designs be finished? The Engineer is finalizing the Wastewater Design right now, so that the Town can give accurate cost estimates to voters.

16) I live in the Village, can I hook on to the new system? The System is currently developing on St. Armand Road, Gore Road, Route 78, Cross or Decatur Street, and Lamkin Street. Please reach out to the Town Administrator to check if you are currently eligible to hook to this system.

17) What will happen to the Village Center if we do not construct a Wastewater System? Without the System, there will be little to no development of the center of Highgate. Any grant monies spent on this project will be required to be paid back and the property will most likely stay as a Town-owned parcel without adding anything to the tax base. The Town could try and sell the old Stinehour Hotel; but without adequate sewer and water the price would be quite reduced or it may not sell. At which point, the Town could allow the building to continue to rot in the ground or pay a great deal of money for the abatement of lead and asbestos prior to tearing it down.

18) How much additional development in the Village Center would this project support? The minimal development that this project would support includes 2 or 3 commercial buildings (with the possibility of a new Post Office), 10-30 Senior Housing Apartments and a New Community Center and Public Library (50-100 person capacity); or any combination of development for which the Town can form public/private partnerships – and that is just on the Village Core Property itself at 6500gallons per day. As we continue to add gallons per day, there is an opportunity for the local businesses to expand and thrive; but also the Highgate Arena could benefit

.19) Is a Town Water Supply being discussed? Only as concerns the Village Core

Property and its development.

20) How will this project impact drinking water in the center of Town? Properly designed wastewater systems protect everyone's drinking water and the groundwater supply.

21) What is the expected life of this Wastewater System? Under normal conditions and basic care, this system should last 50 + years.

22) What if regulatory changes occur during the life of this project? Most projects are judged and regulated by the laws and rules of the times; but change is inevitable. We will adapt as needed just like we are required to with all of the Town's projects.

23) Could we use the 18 acre disposal site that we have acquired for anything else? The land was purchased with grant money specifically for Community Wastewater, but we have the ability to use some of the area for recreational uses.

24) Why don't we just sell the Village Core Property to someone else and let them worry about water and septic? Without Wastewater and Water the Property is less

Attractive to buyers thus fetching a lower price. There is archaeological and soil contamination work still required on the property that the Town has the ability and funding to do, whereas a buyer would continue to lower the price offered. The Town would also lose any say in what type of development was put on the site and what the center of Town would look like.

24) What will happen to the Former Stinehour Hotel ? The Town has completed several studies of the costs to renovate/reuse the old Hotel Property: Arnold & Scangas Architects (2020), gbA Architecture and Planning (2023), and Engineering Ventures (2022). A rough estimate of structural, heating, electrical, exterior and interior would be \$1,000,000. The Town is currently looking for a purchaser that would be interested in renovating and repairing the building in a way that the Town could put this property back onto the tax roll.

25) Will Route 78 be dug up for the Wastewater System Construction? The Town will need to get permission from the State of Vermont Transportation Department to bore under Route 78 or dig it up – the decision which will be made by the State.

26) How much will the Complete Full Design Wastewater System Construction costs be? Preliminary cost estimates are \$2,842,753.; but more accurate figures will be available after Final Design. Funding includes \$1,457,000 State ARPA Grant and \$2,550,000 CWSRF

27) What type of Wastewater System are we designing? Our Wastewater System is designed to act as a giant leach field for the water from your septic tank. You will still need to maintain your septic tank, including pumping out the solids; but taking care of the watery portion of your sewerage lengthens the life of your septic system.

28) Are there systems like ours around the area? Yes, Westford and Londonderry, VT are proposing systems just like ours. You can check them out online.

29) Why should I consider connecting to the Wastewater System? Is your septic system pretty old? Does it not work like it used to? Is wastewater backing up in the home? Is water sitting above ground near your leach field? Has your system failed? Does it cost too much for an engineer to come and design a new system – say nothing about the construction costs? Maybe your lot is not big enough for a replacement system. Maybe you want to plan for the future and be prepared. There are many reasons to consider connecting.

30) When do I need to decide whether or not to connect? If you and your family are interested in hooking to the new Wastewater System, please contact your Town Administrator, Sharon Bousquet at townadmin@highgatevt.org or at (802)868-4922. This will be a first come, first served opportunity. There will be an opportunity to opt in later, if room is available.

31) What are the initial costs to hook up to this Wastewater System? We are getting these costs figured out right now – check back soon!

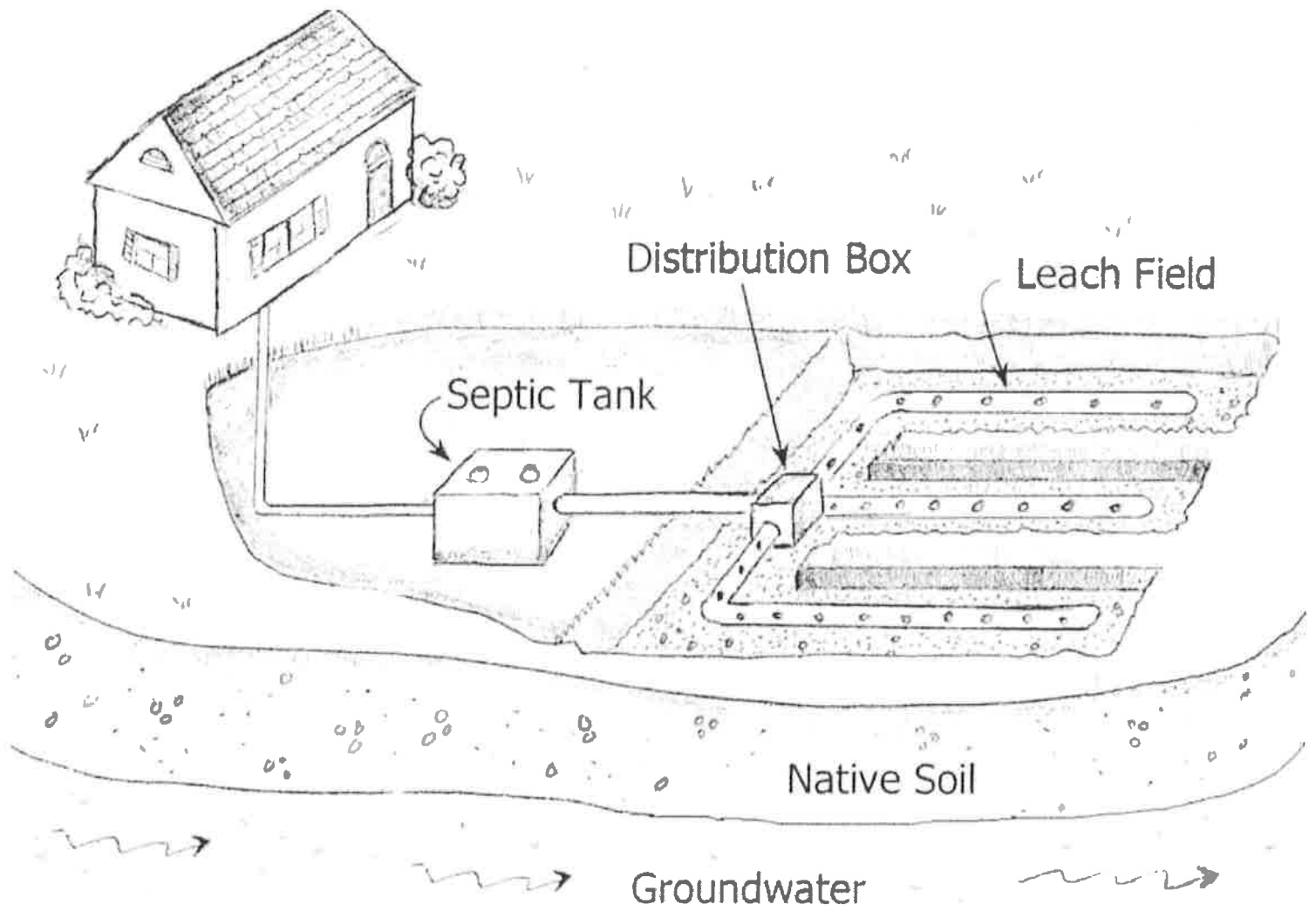
32) What if I cannot afford to connect to this system? Joining the system at the start will cost less than opting in later; but if you cannot afford this opportunity, the State may be able to assist you. Please check with the Town Administrator, Sharon Bousquet, at townadmin@highgatevt.org or (802)868-4922 for additional information.

33) What will my monthly fee be? And how will it be established? We are organizing a Wastewater Board who will be responsible for setting rates. Check back later for details.

34) Who chooses what development goes on the Village Core Property? The VCMP Committee, The Selectboard and YOU! Get involved in the process! Join meetings! Read the Information! Get Informed and Educated! Form your Own Opinion! What do you want to see in the Center of Our Town?

35) What if I do not pay my Wastewater Fees? If reasonable attempts to collect are unable to produce payment, a lien will be placed upon your property, similar to any unpaid utility bill.

36) Will this Wastewater System Expand? If this current proposal helps the citizens of Highgate to take care of its own and redevelop our Village Center, then it is a success. The future will decide if there is a need for expansion, but let's start with the first step.



Normal Private System

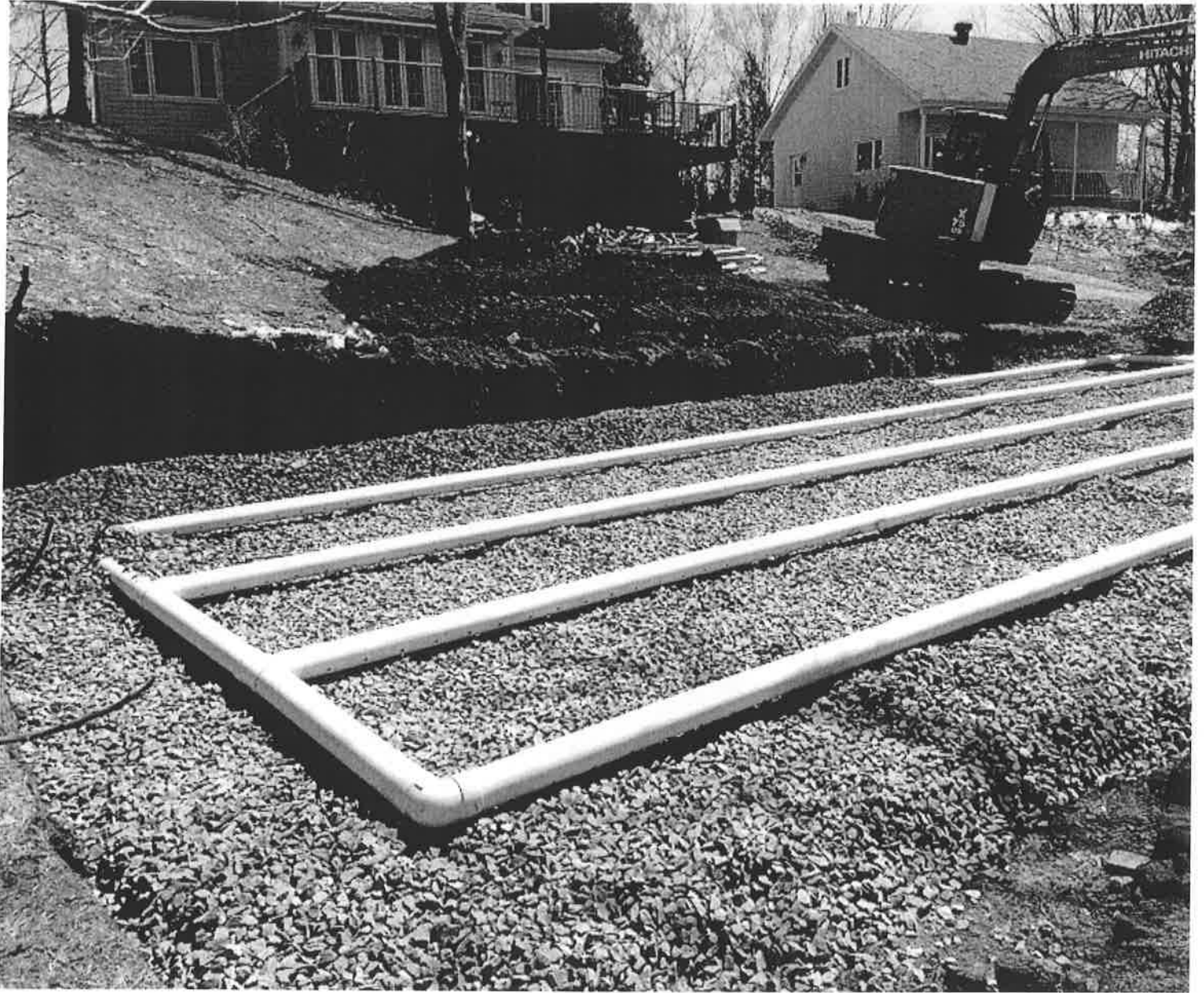
The drain field component of a residential septic system is being put in place

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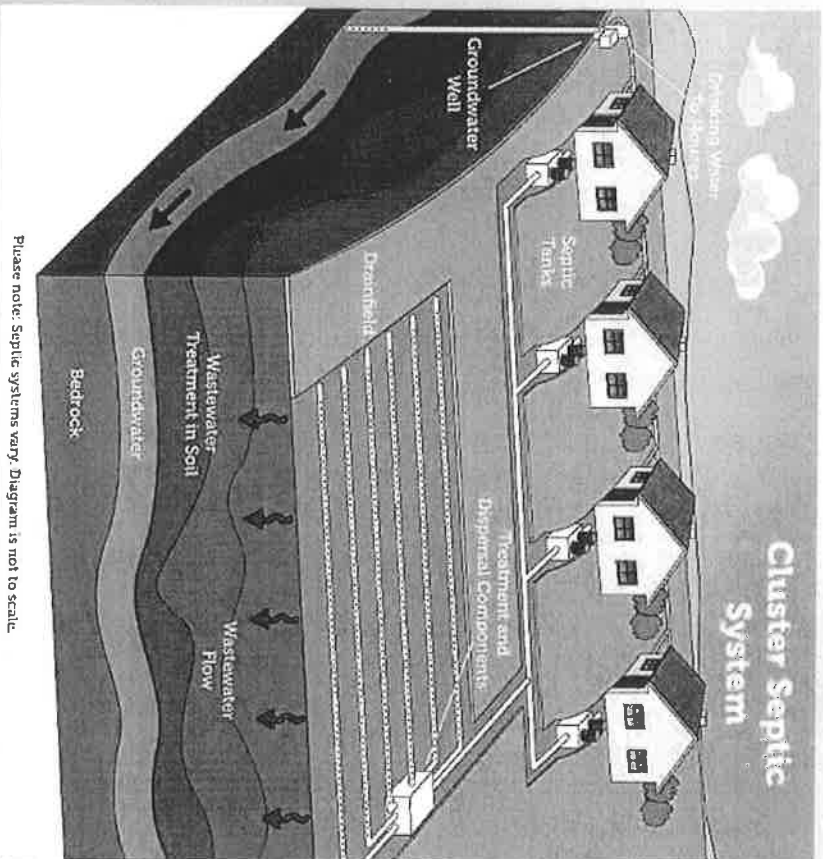
File: Drain field in progress.jpg

Created: 30 April 2019

About Media Viewer



WHAT IS DECENTRALIZED WASTEWATER?



Please note: Septic systems vary. Diagram is not to scale.